T I P S   &   T R I C K S

Photography

A collection of innovative ideas and tips & tricks for taking better photographs

Welcome

The idea behind this publication came about from listening to so many great photography podcasts that range from looking at the philosophical and creative principles, right on through to product reviews. However, in listening and watching different podcasts and the techniques and ideas they portray, it can often be difficult to follow along and remember all the information. Often you would have to back up and listen/watch again and again while trying a technique or trick. Usually, the best way to try out a new idea was to write down the steps and then take the piece of paper to the camera or in the field and try it out. This was the basis for the PDFCast

before you. We wanted to develop a ongoing publication that could be read and followed at the pace and leisure of the reader.

The ideas expressed in this PDFCast and future ones are a combination of ideas that we've encountered from lots of people, websites, seminars, workshops, and just talking with other photographers. They are meant to provide the basics of an idea to inform the beginner into trying new things and spark the more advanced into elaborating on techniques they already may know in trying to take the idea to a new level. We would like to make this publication into a community run PDFCast, there are a lot of great photographers out there with may great ideas and thoughts. So we strongly encourage anyone who

thinks they have a great tip, idea, philosophy to write it up as a short article and email it to us at tipsandtricksphotography@gmail.com to include into the next edition.

This PDFCast has no specific format other than trying to share photographic ideas to help us all become more creative and better photographers.

Enjoy and we look forward to any feedback you may have.

- Jeff Tindall & Ervin Tong

Painting with Light

Long exposures can definitely be a fun thing

Written by Jeff Tindall

Experimenting with your camera can be a lot of fun. Painting with light is a technique that has been around for a while, here is an interesting twist that creates light streaks and great looking photographs.

In my many hours of surfing the web for good photography sites, I ran across this technique that produced amazing looking photographs and I figured I would pass the technique along.

Here are the things you will need:

• Flash-light

• Aluminum Foil

• Tripod

• Remote Trigger or self timer (optional)

• Tape

• Patience

Tear off a piece of foil about 8 inches long and wrap it around your flash-light. Use the tape to secure it to the light so it won't fall off and around the the foil where the light is escaping (other then the hole in the front). Effectively what you should end up with is a flash-light with a aluminum foil extension (see the inset pictures).

Now comes the patience aspect of the technique, what you are going to want to do is shape the front of the aluminum foil anyway you want, if you make it more flat you will end up with for light streaks in your photograph. Once you have that ready, not comes the patience, your going to want to take a long exposure, the longer the exposure the more time you have to paint, but the more likely noise. With your camera setup on a tripod and your flash-light turned in position, trigger the shutter and

begin dragging the light around in the field of view of the lens. Anywhere the light goes is where you will see detail and light streaks. The patience really comes in with the timing. You have a limited amount of time to move the flash light where you want it to end up and getting smooth flowing lines of light can be difficult. If you do have problems getting smooth lines, try attaching a string to the end of the light and pull it that way.

After you got the shot you want, your likely disappointed with the colour of the light. If it's a generic flashlight, you likely have a dull tungsten colour cast. If it's an LED then likely a more cool colour cast. Either way you don't have to be stuck with the colour. Simply open the photo using Photoshop or any other reputable image

program and manipulate the curves to change the colour of the light.
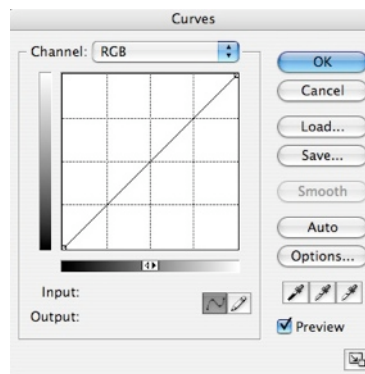
I found the best way to change the curves is to use each individual channel. If there is often more in the picture other than the light streaks then they will be change

too (eg. flash light). If this happens then you could just paint away the curves adjustment for the areas you don't like.
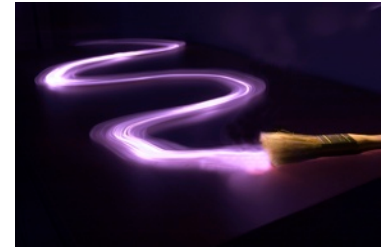
Once you've had a chance to play around with the technique, send along so pictures to be put into the next newsletter.
tipsandtricksphotography@gmail.com

Adding a Signature in Photoshop

*If your going to display you photographs for public display or just want to indicate that you took the photo. You can add a signature to your photos using Photoshop.*

To use your actual signature and not generic text you will need to import a picture of your signature using a scanner or digital camera, preferably on a white background. For security purposes, I am simply using a saved picture with generic text for this example.

Jeff Tindall

Once your signature is scanned or goto Edit --> Define Brush Preset. This creates a new brush that is based on your signature. Enter the title you want to call your new signature brush and hit OK.

Now if you goto the brush tool and scroll through all your brushes, at the bottom will be your signature brush. Select the new brush and you can now click once on your photo to stamp your signature. The great thing about this is that it's easy to change the size and colour of your signature to best fit your photograph with minimum hassles.
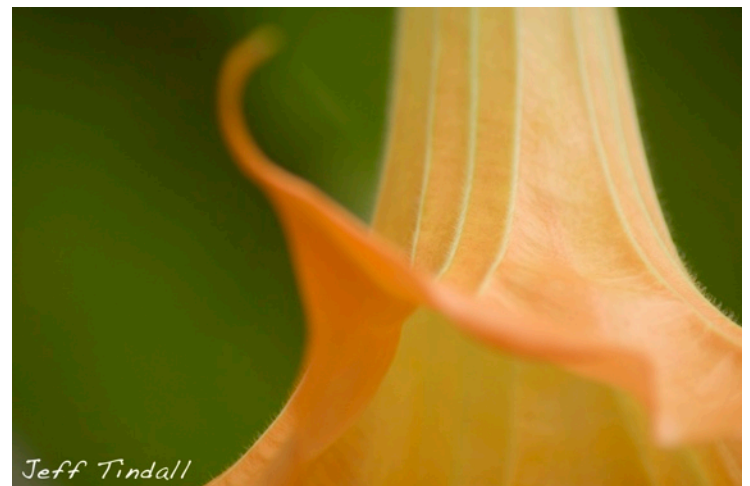
Make your Own White Balance Disc

A few cheap items and a little bit of work and you won't have to worry about post-processing white balance issues

Written by Jeff Tindall

There are many good ways to determine white balance (grey cards, auto settings on the camera, Expodisc, etc...) The latter is a great white balance tool because it is simple, you put the product over the top of your lens, aim it a the light source, and set the custom white balance. It saves time on using grey cards and with post-processing a RAW file.

I was going to pick one up, but after hearing the cost ($159), both my bank account and my morality wouldn't allow me to purchase an item that looked like it has a profit margin of 200+%. After looking at its construction and reading of other ways to set WB (grey cards, old Pringles lids, coffee filters), I

realized that setting proper white balance is nothing more then using a white lid and a diffuser.
So here is my attempt at making one.
The first thing I acquired was the diffuser. This is definitely the toughest piece to get. I used some scrap screening from a fluorescent light. You can acquire this from hardware stores or just ask a building manager for any broken or scrap pieces.
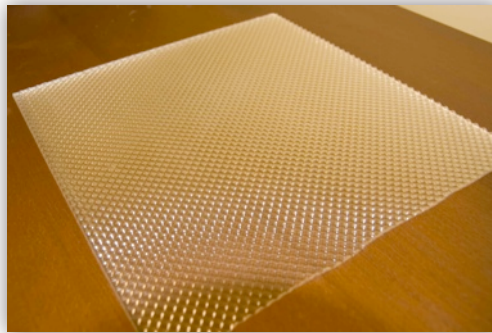
Now for the tools, I tried this a couple of ways and the easiest and most precise way I found was to purchase a cheap hole saw that attaches to a drill. A hole saw is the tool used to install a door

knobs.
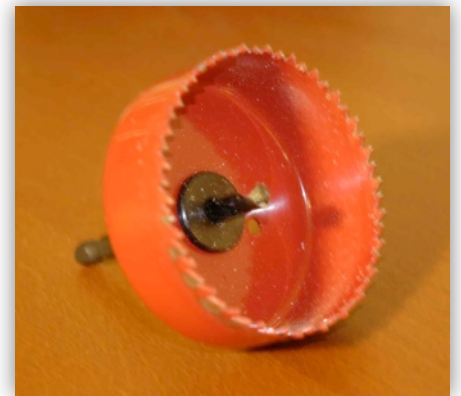
The bigger you can get the better, after all a big homemade white balance disc will fit over top of small lens, but not the reverse. For estimates on size a 3 inch diameter hole saw ends up being about a 70mm diameter. The only problem I found is that after 3" the next common size is 4". I couldn't find any sizes in between.
It would be good to pick up a grinder bit and/or sandpaper to remove burs that occur from the drilling and grind down any chunks of plastic that didn't get properly cut. When drilling out a

circle, your going to want to raise the drill bit in the middle of the hole saw upwards so you don't have a hole in the middle of your diffuser. However before you do this, I suggest drilling out a template with the drill bit lowered, this creates a large hole that you can place your hole saw in as a guide. I tried drilling directly with the bit raised and without a guide and ended up scratching the diffuser sheet. Once the circular diffuser is cut out, grind down any abnormalities and smooth the edges with sandpaper.

The other key component to making a homemade white balance disc is finding a uniform translucent material that can accurately reflect 18% grey. I tested out several materials that have been suggested from searching the web (tissue paper, lens paper, filter paper, coffee lid) under several lighting conditions (incandescent, fluorescent, overcast, sunny). It appears that a white plastic lid works best for accurately obtaining the proper white balance.

Most companies, produce lids that have writing or a picture on them, making them not useable for measuring white balance, however I know of two products (at least in Canada) that produce completely white lids: GoodHost iced tea and diet Nestle iced tea.

Edwin Leong did a comparison of an Expodisc and a plastic lid, he found that although the lid did a pretty good job at capturing the white balance, there was a colour cast associated with it. This is why I added the diffuser. The light coming in is first diffused on to the plastic lid and then converted to a 18% equivalent by the lid. My thinking is that the diffuser minimizes colour casts.

The only thing left to do is stick them together, I would suggest using some glue on the outer edges (so it doesn't interfere with the incoming light). You can also stick it to a UV filter or adapter ring. Thats it, a few cheap simple supplies and a little bit of work and you have a great white balance tool. I think fundamentally there is not much of a difference between the homemade version and the real thing. Attaching a lanyard to it to hang around your neck is a good idea for quickly access and change white balance as the light conditions change.

Increase the ISO on Your Camera

Digital cameras tend to range in ISO between 100 to 1600 (for the Canons, a 1600 push to 3200). Recently, I read an article at KenRockwell.com that tells you how to push a cameras ISO even higher. Although this tip was for Nikon camera, on other digital SLR cameras. Here's how you do it:

Pushing the ISO is more of a work around using your camera settings and a little post-processing. When you want to achieve an ISO past 1600, set the cameras ISO to 1600 and then adjust the exposure compensation. Adjusting the exposure compensation to -1 will push the ISO to 3200, a -2 pushes to 6400 etc... When you load your RAW images onto your computer for post processing, just adjust the the exposure to +1 or +2, the opposite of your in camera exposure compensation. If you shoot jpg, you can achieve the same result by adjusting the curves in Photoshop. Noise and image quality are the same as other cameras set directly to those speeds, if they can go that high!

Creating Heart Shadows

Written By Ervin Tong

Inspired by a shot I had seen of a pair of glasses casting a heart shaped shadow onto a page of a book, I decided to try a similar shot. Unfortunately, my glasses are square and wouldn't cast the shadow that I wanted. I decided to give it a go with my polarizer instead. However, using a polarizer seemed a bit contrived (whereas the glasses setup felt more natural). Thus, I decided that a picture of a heart would complement the shadow. Perhaps I could use it as a biologist's Valentine's card? Alright then, how's it done? There were two tricky parts involved with setting up this shot. The first was getting the polarizer to stay standing. After 20 minutes unsuccessfully trying to balance it on my book, I used a small piece of tape attach it to the page. The other tricky part is creating a nice shadow. This involved the positioning of the light-source as well as the type of book you choose. For the lighting, I turned off all other lights in the room and just used my desk-lamp. The higher the light is from the polarizer the shorter the shadow and vice versa. You can fiddle with it to suit your taste, but in this shot the light was just out of the top of the frame, almost right above my filter. The second part involved with creating the shadow is the book you choose. A thicker book is better

because when open, the pages curve more, creating a rounder heart. In this case, I used my copy of Gray's Anatomy (2 inches thick).

This is the original picture straight out of the camera. Notice that the piece of tape I used is visible in the shadow, the page is a little dark (owing to the light fall-off from my lamp), and the shadow that's cast is not uniform
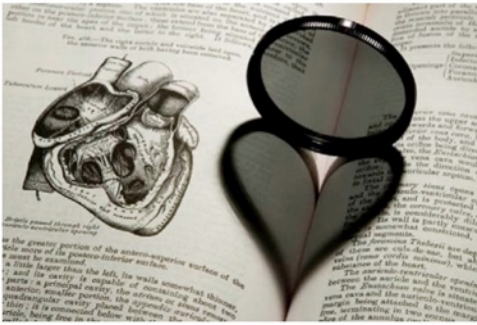

The uniformity of the shadow will be important later on.

My first adjustment in Photoshop was to create a new levels layer to get the page a little brighter
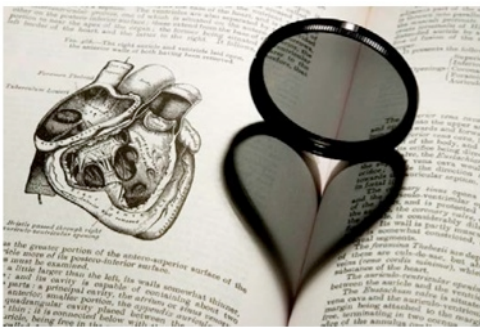
I then duplicated my image and burned the edges of the heart shadow a little more, eliminating

the lighter spots. While I tried not to make a large adjustment with the burn tool, the gray edges picked up a lot of color and looked unnatural in the next step.
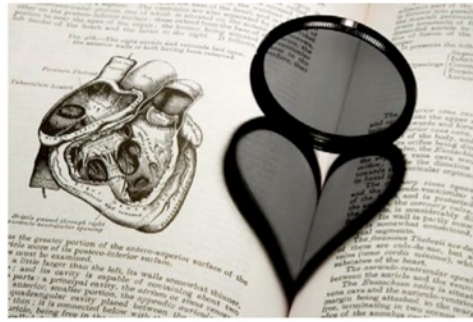

Using the color replacement tool, I changed the neutral gray of the polarizer to a classical heart red.
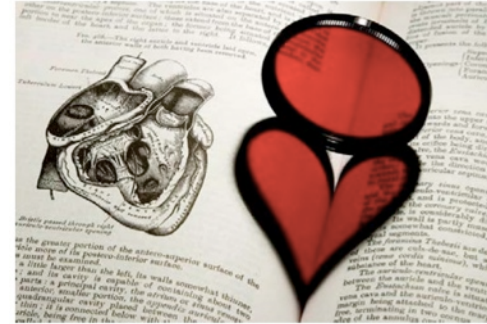
The next steps were to create a new color balance layer to remove the slight yellow cast from the page, as well as a small modification with the clone stamp tool to remove the last little piece of tape sticking out of the shadow.

Finally, a quick run through with the unsharp mask filter.
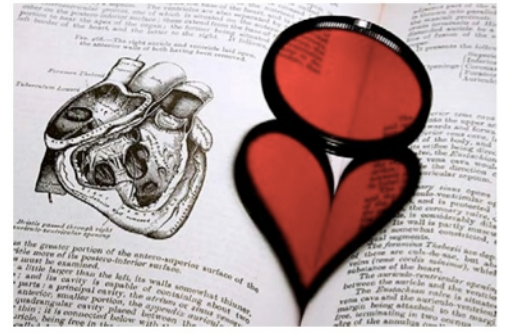
With this simple setup, there are numerous photographic possibilities. Play around with it, there are so many things you could change to get a completely different photograph with the same setup: the angle of the light, the distance or the light, the angle of the book in relation to the light. Perhaps try a different filter, a different book, more importantly go out, take some pictures and have fun.

Questions & Comments

If you have a topic you would like to know more about or a topic you would like to share please feel free to send us the article and any pictures to include in an up and coming issue. tipsandtricksphotography@gmail.com.